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THE SUN

Gift of Freedom

We who take freedom for granted have been cheered in this holiday season by the return to free soil of the 1,113 Cuban captives who set out armed eighteen months ago in a calamitous effort to break the grip of tyranny on their country. Some of them soon will be joined by relatives also allowed to leave Fidel Castro's island prison. The episode is not wholly in the Christmas spirit; ransom and bribery have never been part of the tradition of giving. But the conditions imposed for the release of these people in no way diminishes the relief over their return.

It is well to remember, nevertheless, that there still are millions of people behind barricades around the world. For them, for the Poles, the East Germans, the captives of the Baltic states, the Hungarians and many more in Eastern Europe and Asia, there is no intercessor, no price that can be paid. Yet, hope flickers on, and there are a few who dare take their lives in their hands and snatch the gift of freedom.

In the dark hours of Christmas night an East German bus protected by crude steel plates crashed through Communist barriers and bullets and swept eight refugees safely to West Berlin. For now these people remain anonymous, nor do their names matter. Their courage is what matters, and their willingness to stake their future, indeed their lives, on a gamble almost hopeless.

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